

## Ditransitive sentences in Brazilian Portuguese: from a VP shell to a pP shell

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The goal of this paper is to propose an approach for ditransitive constructions in Brazilian Portuguese (BP), taking into account the change in the realization of its prepositional phrase. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Brazilian Portuguese (BP) has initiated a reanalysis of the possible strategies to head indirect arguments by generalizing the use of the full preposition *para* ‘to’ and *de* ‘of’ in the context of ditransitive with verbs of movement, transfer and creation – such as *dar* ‘give’, *enviar* ‘send’ and *preparar* ‘prepare’. Alongside with the substitution of the prepositions stated above, the morphological notation of the dative argument - represented by the third person clitics *lhe(s)* – is also replaced by other strategies in BP, such as 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronouns preceded by *para* - *para ele(s)/ ela(s)* ‘to him/ her/ them’, example (01) (cf. Torres Morais & Berlinck, 2006 and 2007; Torres Morais & Salles, 2010).

- (01) João enviou uma carta *para* Maria / *para* ela  
João sent a letter P<sub>para (to)</sub> the Maria. OBL / to her.3SG

The theory on argument structure has advanced to a great extent since Larson’s (1988) VP shell proposal for the two types of ditransitives in English - namely, the Prepositional Dative Construction (PDC) ‘Mary gave a book to John’ and the Double Object Construction (DOC) ‘Mary gave John a book’. Aiming to explain this *dative alternation*, Marantz (1993) postulated the existence of an applicative head to introduce the indirect argument of a DOC in order to account for the absence of the preposition. Building on Marantz’s proposal, Pylkänninen (2002) introduced the concepts of high and low applicatives. This idea was the ground for Cuervo (2003), Diaconescu & Rivero (2007) and Torres Morais (2007) to propose that Spanish, Romanian and European Portuguese (EP) also exhibit dative alternation.

I assume, however, that the change in the prepositions as well as the decreasing use of third person dative clitics set BP apart from these Romance languages. The argument to support the fact that EP has a DOC is the presence of a dummy preposition that lexicalizes the applicative head, example (02a). On the other hand, there is also a PDC in which the IO is introduced by a lexical/true preposition and cannot be substituted by the clitic, example (2b). Therefore, the main characteristic of the DOC in EP is that the element introduced by the preposition can alternate with the dative clitics and in the PDC it cannot.

- (02) a. O João enviou uma carta *à* Maria /enviou-*lhe* uma carta.  
The João sent a letter P<sub>a (to)</sub> the Maria. DAT/ sent -3SG.DAT a letter  
a’ [v<sub>P</sub> O João [v’ v [VP enviou [AppIP *à* Maria/*lhe* [APPL’ Ø [DP uma carta]]]]]]]  
b. O João enviou (\**lhe*) uma carta *para* a Maria / Lisboa.  
The João sent (3SG. DAT) a letter P<sub>para (to)</sub> Maria.OBL / Lisbon.OBL  
b’ [v<sub>P</sub> O João [v’ v [VP enviou [pP uma carta [p’ *para/a* [DPgoal/locative a Maria /Lisboa]]]]]]]

Several studies have shown that in BP the lexical preposition *para* ‘to’ takes the place of the dummy preposition *a* ‘to’ in EP. (cf. Torres Morais & Berlinck, 2006 and 2007; Torres Morais & Salles, 2010). In BP, besides the *locative* reading already present in EP (2b), *para* is taking the place of the preposition *a* also in the contexts in which the IO has the semantic reading of *goal* or *benefactive*. This substitution, coupled with the fact that BP cannot express the dative case morphologically by using the 3<sup>rd</sup> person clitics anymore, are evidence that the low applicative head is inactive in this variety of Portuguese. Hence, the oblique complement is introduced in the structure by a pP projection. On this basis, I assume that BP prepositions have undergone a general shift from case markers to lexically full prepositions.

Following on from the works of Svenonius (2003, 2004) and Wood (2012), it is possible to draw a further parallel between the *p*P and *v*P domain, in the sense that the prepositional structure involves a ‘light preposition’ *p* and a P which mirror the categories *v* and V. Accordingly, a Figure argument (cf. Talmy, 1978) – that is, the DO in the ditransitive structure - is introduced in the Spec position of the *p*P projection. The complement of the *p* head is, therefore, a Ground argument - namely, the IO, which is introduced by a preposition in a PP head, structure in (03):

(03) [<sub>VP</sub> João [<sub>V'</sub> *v* [<sub>VP</sub> enviou [<sub>PP</sub> uma carta [<sub>P'</sub> Ø [<sub>PP</sub> para Maria/ ela]]]]]]]]

Therefore, the lexical/ full preposition is placed under the PP head because, according to Svenonius (2003), the preposition establishes a close relation with the Ground rather than the Figure since it applies c-selection restrictions in relation to the Ground (the IO), not the Figure (DO). For instance, the preposition *para*, with transfer and movement verbs, can only select complements that can convey the semantic reading of a Goal or Beneficiary of the action.

The head *p* is not the higher head capable of introducing arguments in the relevant local domain – as the *Voice* head above legitimates an agentive relation. This means that *p* can be perfectly responsible for holding a thematic relation. In turn, this crucially confirms Cuervo’s proposal (2010) that the ditransitive verbs do not require two separate arguments, but, in fact, select a *relation* between the OD and the OI. Hence, *ditransitivity* turns out to be only a descriptive notion perceived on the surface and the so-called *ditransitive verbs* are, actually, part of the *non-core* transitive verb inventory, to use Levin’s term (1999).

**Keywords:** syntax, ditransitive sentences, Brazilian Portuguese

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